had marked effect. Designs, indeed, are often highly symbolic and frequently give opportunity for that delicate expression by a donoi of wishes for good fortune in which the Chinese have been and are adepts. Pottery and porcelain, therefore, have combined utility with an opportunity for aesthetic and even religious feeling and have occupied a large part in the life of the Chinese.

BRONZE

Rather more than with some peoples, bronze has had among the Chinese an important role as a means of artistic expression. In this there may be additional evidence of Chinese conservatism.

Under the Shang and the Chou, when bronze was the metal most commonly in use, it naturally loomed large as an art material. Inevitably, moreover, a larger number of objects of bronze survived than of those made of more perishable substances. The Chinese, therefore, with their admiration for antiquity, have highly prized the bronzes of their early centuries, have devoted much study to them, and have continued to employ the metal for many of their art objects. In numbers of these they have copied ancient design^, either with a good deal of fidelity or with more or less freedom in detail, and in others they have branched out into new forms. Artistically China has continued in no small degree to live in the bronze age.

Even in the Han the chance exhumation of an antique bronze vessel was considered a notable event. Many books on ancient bronzes have been written and valued collections of the original objects have been made. The Sung is the first dynasty in which these treatises seem to have been composed in fairly large numbers, but we know that one was written as far back as the sixth

century of our era and in still earlier works on ritual the names and dimensions of many bronze vessels are carefully noted. Chinese have prized their older bronzes not only for their age and their beauty but because many contain inscriptions. The reverence for the written character and the zeal for discovering its earliest forms have enhanced the value placed upon inscribed vessels.

Recent archeology has disclosed bronzes which are indubitably from the Shang, but many specimens attributed to that dynasty do not certainly go back that far. Undoubtedly, however, many